

**ANN HRAYCHUCK**STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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**Testimony of Rep. Ann Hraychuck
Before the Assembly Committee on Renewable Energy and Rural Affairs
Regarding Assembly Bill 731**

Good morning, Chairman Jorgensen and committee members. I appreciate having the opportunity to speak with you about Assembly Bill 731 which establishes electronic voting procedures for cooperatives.

Currently, cooperative board elections take place at annual meetings and voting is done in-person. Some co-ops also provide mail-in ballots for their absentee members. Assembly Bill 731 gives cooperatives and their members the option of voting electronically.

Electronic voting is voting online via email or website. For example, an absent cooperative member would be able to vote for a director by electronic means through a specialized program. The cooperative would be able to identify that it is a member who is casting a vote, as members would be provided a login ID and password.

An increasing number of cooperative members prefer to interact via the internet and many pay their bills online. This convenience certainly could apply to director elections, which would result in improved member participation and decreased cost. For rural communities, this is a wonderful option to increase participation for members that would otherwise have to drive long distances to get to their annual meeting.

Online voting can utilize pictures and video stream about candidates, provide background information, as well as create greater transparency in the election process.

To be clear, this bill does not mandate anything. Each board would still need to amend their bylaws to allow electronic ballots for their particular cooperative if they decided this is an alternative they would like to pursue.

This was an idea that was brought to my attention by Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative and is similar to a law that the State of Minnesota has enacted.

I would like to thank Senator Taylor for her work on AB 731 and thank you for your time.